

SITE INSPECTION REPORT
Calumet Container Superfund Site
September 30, 2002

(REPORT DATE: October 3, 2002, minor revisions November 6, 2002)

ATTENDEES:

Gregory T. Carlson, U.S. EPA-Wetlands
 Verneta Simon, U.S. EPA-Superfund
 Mardi Klevs, U.S. EPA-Chicago Team Manager
 John Perrecone, U.S. EPA-Habitat Team Manager
 Paul Labus, The Nature Conservancy
 Rick, Weston (Superfund contractor)

SITE: A triangular shaped 11 acres southeast of the intersection of 136th Street and Indiana Harbor Belt railroad line - straddling the State line between Illinois (on the west) and Indiana (bulk of the site on the east); or the west half of the northwest quarter of Section 24, T37N, R10W, Hammond, Lake County, Indiana

CONDITIONS: Mostly sunny and about 70 degrees F

HISTORY/BACKGROUND: Superfund's Verneta Simon asked the wetland program to review a site wetland delineation, including whether there was Federal jurisdiction, and to preliminarily assess the site's wetland functions.

OBSERVATIONS: Arriving at the site about 9:45 a.m., Messrs. Simon, Perrecone, Klevs and Carlson met Mr. Labus and Rick, Superfund contractor. Carlson and Simon headed off-site to the northeast and southwest to determine whether surface water connections existed to other "waters of the U.S." To the northeast, across 136th Street, and on the east side of another line of the IN Harbor Belt railway, lies a large pond with an emergent fringe of wetland vegetation (largely *Phragmites australis*). This pond drains west, via culvert, under the IN Harbor Belt railway tracks, then after a short 10'-15' run of open water continues west, via culvert, under an unimproved access road to a U.S. Government facility and becomes part of a surface water way that connects it to Wolf Lake (an interstate waterbody) in a northward direction. In other words, if the man-made features of the landscape are discounted, i.e., 136th St., railway tracks and access road, the wetlands at the Calumet Container site could be considered adjacent to an unnamed tributary to Wolf Lake.

To the southwest, the emergent wetland fringe surrounding much of Powderhorn Lake (largely *Lythrum salicaria*) - a Cook County (Illinois) Forest Preserve District site - would be contiguous with the Calumet Container site wetlands; again discounting the two set of railway tracks that now separate the two sites.

Regarding Roy F. Weston, Inc., site wetland delineation, the boundaries drawn between wetland and upland appear accurate. However, much of Wetland Area #4 appears to be disturbed wetland existing on miscellaneous fill which in all likelihood covers a natural wetland surface. As such, the flora species diversity is poor consisting of tolerant Eurasian weeds and native

pioneering or invasive species.

Regarding the site's functional values, the three most significant (and probably the three most valued functions - from a human perspective) are habitat, water storage and water filtration. The site is isolated by 136th Street on the north and railway lines on the southeast and west. Almost the entire site appears to have been disturbed in any number of ways. In the early 1980s, a Superfund emergency removal action removed toxic concentrations of heavy metals (if not other contaminants - see Superfund files for further details) from past industrial use on the site. A building was removed. A pond on the site was apparently filled; another pond apparently dug since 1965 and mapped as part of Wetland Area 1 (see Weston report, Appendix A). This work turned about one half of the site into "old field" or upland. Two petroleum/natural gas pipelines bisect the site into north and south halves. Many scattered piles of construction and equipment debris lie within Wetland Area #4 and the upland areas to the south.

The immediately surrounding areas have the following land uses:

1. North - slag filled wetland turning into "old field" and open dumping area; pond to the northeast across 136th St.; trailer park and forest fringe to the northwest (in Illinois);
2. East - wetlands immediately to the east, but shortly thereafter, a trailer park;
3. South - some wetlands along the southeast oriented IN Harbor Belt railway line otherwise, older commercial/industrial lands - some with buildings, some without; and
4. West - wetlands associated with Powderhorn Lake and secondary forest further to the north and east of a trailer park.

The site's isolation, fragmentation and contamination make for low habitat values.

The site's isolation, fragmentation and contamination make for low values for water filtration and storage also. As currently situated, parts of the site are depressional relative to the surrounding landscape, though in a larger scale, the entire region is part of the Chicago Lake Plain - an area generally of low relief - accounting for much of the area's current and former wetlands. Second hand information from local sources contend that 136th Street has been inundated from locally heavy rainfall events. In any case, local precipitation or flooding is likely to be held in depressions or run-off into storm sewers. Local human populations are probably on urban water systems. Subsurface site seepage to any existing subterranean aquifers may have contamination associated with it. All these factors limit the functional value of the site for cleansing waters.

What value this site has now is as a travel corridor. In addition, it has the potential to act as usable open or green space - a local amenity to the surrounding residential and business/industrial areas. It lies between Powderhorn Lake to the southwest and Wolf Lake to the north/northeast. But for 136th Street and the railway lines, the space between, including the 11 acre Calumet Container site, is suitable to establish a major travel corridor connecting these two large aquatic systems, though the slag filled wetland north of 136th Street- now old field/open dump - wouldn't be much more than gray space.